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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [FR](#) [MR](#) [MA](#)
SUBJECT: MAURITANIA/MADAGASCAR: FRENCH VIEW ELECTIONS AS
THE WAY OUT

REF: A. PARIS 504
[1](#)B. PARIS 483

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Kathleen Allegrone, 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Elections in Mauritania and Madagascar could be the way to end the political impasses in both countries, Presidential Deputy Diplomatic Advisor Bruno Joubert said on April 3. He added that in both places, those who organize the elections should not be candidates and those who are candidates should not be the organizers. Joubert acknowledged that French and U.S. approaches might diverge in what remain fluid situations; he emphasized his keen interest in consultations in the U.S. April 14-15. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) PolMinCouns on April 3 called on Bruno Joubert, President Sarkozy's deputy diplomatic advisor and his lead advisor on Africa, for a readout of Sarkozy's March 26-27 visits to DRC, ROC, and Niger (reported ref A). Joubert said that he looked forward to consultations in the U.S. during his planned April 14-15 visit, during which he hoped to meet with AF A/S-Designate Carson, NSC AF Senior Director Gavin, and UN PermRep Rice, among others. Following his briefing on Sarkozy's trip, we asked Joubert to explain French policy on Mauritania and Madagascar, noting that there seemed to be some change in France's position concerning both. Joubert acknowledged that French policy was evolving.

Mauritania

[1](#)3. (C) Joubert said that as time passed, the situation in Mauritania was worsening and not improving (see ref B for MFA DAS-equivalent Christine Fages's comments in a similar vein). The Sahel security issue, by which he meant the threat posed by al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, was an increasing concern. He described the situation as a "morass," with opposition leader Ahmed Ould Daddah "no better" than junta leader Aziz. Deposed President Abadallahi wanted support but was doing very little to move the process along. The political impasse risked increased social tension and a possible fracturing of society, he asserted. Joubert said that France had tried to "steer events" in the right direction. The international community needed to find an "acceptable way out." One such scenario could involve elections, to be organized by someone other than Aziz, such as the President of Mauritania's Senate. Aziz would have no role in organizing the elections or in governing, as he would have to resign in order to run for office. Joubert said that France had asked Aziz to think about such a scenario. Joubert indicated that France could accept a postponement in the date of the elections if there were some assurance that they would be held along the lines he described.

[1](#)4. (C) Joubert acknowledged that this scenario was "not perfect" but that it offered a possibly acceptable solution

to break the impasse and return Mauritania to some semblance of normality. If such a scenario were not implemented, Aziz would continue in power anyway but become increasingly isolated, which would have negative effects on Mauritania itself and on the region as a whole.

Madagascar

15. (C) Joubert said that, while France officially viewed Rajoelina's seizure of power as a "coup" and deplored the way power was transferred, there was some justification in viewing events as a "popular revolution" rather than as a "coup" and that this "revolution" was more directed at ousting deposed President Ravalomanana than in hoisting Rajoelina into power. Rajoelina had indicated an intention to hold elections "within two years," and France had already said that this period was too long. (NOTE: Recent press reports indicate Rajoelina has announced October 2010 as the date for elections. END NOTE.) Joubert said that France had told Rajoelina that he faced a choice: either to stand for election but then have no role in organizing the elections or else organize the elections but then not run. Joubert indicated that the choice was similar to the one France had placed before Aziz -- either organize elections or run for office, but not do both.

Working with U.S.

16. (C) Joubert said that the GOF valued highly its dialogue with the U.S. on these and other AF topics. He indicated

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that the policies he had described toward Mauritania and Madagascar might not align exactly with U.S. policy, but he said that movement in our approaches was necessary to break the impasses in both cases. He said he hoped to discuss these and other issues in the U.S. when he travels there April 14-15 for consultations with USG officials.

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